

## **PREFACE TO THE RECIRCULATED EIR**

A Draft EIR ("Draft EIR") for the proposed Merriam Mountains project was circulated for public review from August 30 to October 15, 2007. All interested persons and organizations had an opportunity during this time to submit their written comments on the Draft EIR to the County of San Diego.

Since circulation of the Draft EIR, several additions or changes have been made to the proposed Merriam Mountains project. These additions or changes include the following: (1) addition of a General Plan Amendment/Circulation Element (GPA/CE) to redesignate Deer Springs Road and delete the planned extension of Buena Creek Road; (2) changes in the proposed alignment of Deer Springs Road; (3) addition of an on-site fire station; (4) potential widening of Twin Oaks Valley Road in the City of San Marcos; and (5) a variety of other minor changes and corrections.

In addition to changes in the proposed Merriam Mountains project, there have been additions or changes in the project analysis since the Draft EIR was circulated. These additions or changes include the following: (1) additional details about the project design; (2) expansion of the cumulative projects list; (3) updated traffic counts; and (4) compliance with the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act. Primary new details about project design include description of the Twin Oaks Valley Road frontage improvements and equestrian staging areas; the I-15/Deer Springs Road interchange; a revised design for the cut slope on Deer Springs Road; additional sound walls on Deer Springs Road; and the addition of an off-site improvement associated with upsizing an existing pipeline.

The additions and changes in the proposed Merriam Mountains project have resulted in new or different significant adverse impacts in some categories. For instance, the equestrian staging area results in impacts to mafic chaparral. In addition, the revised alignment of Deer Springs Road results in changes to impacts for various vegetation communities, as well as an increase in the number of individual homes affected by traffic noise. The addition of an on-site fire station results in potential impacts to on-site residences from noise associated with a fire station. The expansion of the cumulative projects list alters the significance of impacts on some intersections and road segments and to individual homes affected by traffic noise along Deer Springs Road. In a few cases, additional mitigation measures have been required to reduce or avoid the significant impacts of changes in the Merriam Mountains project. In all cases, the applicant has agreed to implement feasible mitigation measures.

The proposed GPA/CE is required for internal consistency with the existing Land Use Element of the General Plan. The impacts of reclassifying Deer Springs Road as a prime arterial instead of a major road are addressed separately because the physical impacts will not occur at the same time as the proposed Merriam Mountains project, and the reclassification is necessary to

accommodate buildout traffic generated by the existing Land Use Element, with or without the Merriam Mountains project.

Although the revised project description and analysis results in identification of several new significant impacts, all of the new impacts can be reduced to below a level of significance with adoption of identified mitigation measures, except for certain noise impacts associated with future construction of Deer Springs Road as a prime arterial pursuant to the proposed Circulation Element Amendment. Except for the new significant unavoidable noise impacts related to the Circulation Element Amendment, the conclusions in the Draft EIR with respect to significance after mitigation have not changed as a result of the revised project description and analysis. Table S-1 of this EIR provides a detailed summary of the changes in impacts and mitigation measures when compared with the August 2007 Draft EIR.

Due to these additions and changes in the Draft EIR, the County has decided to recirculate a revised draft EIR ("Recirculated EIR" or "REIR" for the Merriam Mountains project. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5(f)(2), the County requests that reviewers limit their comments to the revised chapters or portions of the REIR, as indicated by underscoring. The revised portions upon which comments will be accepted include the entirety of Subchapters 2.2 (Transportation/Traffic) and 2.4 (Noise), the entirety of Chapter 9 (GPA/CE), major portions of Subchapters 2.1 (Air Quality) and 3.1 (Aesthetics), and all other portions of the REIR that are underscored to indicate a change from the previously circulated Draft EIR. In addition, Appendices G, H, J, L, M, O and P are new and comments will be accepted on these appendices.

Upon completion of the circulation period for the REIR, the County will respond to: (i) comments received during the initial circulation period that relate to chapters or portions of the document that were not revised and recirculated and (ii) comments received during the recirculation period that relate to the chapters or portions of the Draft EIR that were received and recirculated.